



SECTION I: ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Judges

Judicial Committees

The judicial committees address Court-related issues and consist of bankruptcy judges and management staff from the Clerk's Office. These committees are responsible for implementing Court policy and providing feedback regarding Court operations, facilities, and administrative issues. During 1999, the standing judicial committees were

- ! **Executive Committee**
- ! **Case Management Committee**
- ! **Chapter 13 Committee**
- ! **Education and Training Committee**
- ! ***Pro Se* Committee**
- ! **Rules Committee**
- ! **United States Trustee Liaison Committee**

The task force/*ad hoc* committees were

- ! **Alternative Dispute Resolution Committee**
- ! **Bankruptcy Foreclosure Scam Task Force**
- ! **Long Range Plan Committee**



Honorable Geraldine Mund Reappointed Chief Judge

The Honorable Geraldine Mund was reappointed in December 1999 by the District Court to a second three-year term as Chief Bankruptcy Judge of the Central District of California. Chief Judge Mund's new term commenced January 1, 2000.

Honorable Barry Russell Selected to Preside Over Bankruptcy Appellate Panel

The Honorable Barry Russell was chosen by the Ninth Circuit Council as the presiding judge of the Ninth Circuit Bankruptcy Appellate Panel (BAP) for a term commencing September 1, 1999, and ending December 31, 2001. Judge Russell has served on the BAP since 1988.

Honorable Lisa Hill Fenning Reappointed

Effective December 2, 1999, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals reappointed the Honorable Lisa Hill Fenning to a second 14-year term as a bankruptcy judge for the Central District of California. Judge Fenning, who maintains her chambers in Los Angeles, initially was appointed to serve as a bankruptcy judge in 1985.

**Photo not
available for
public
viewing.**

**Chief Judge
Geraldine Mund
administers the
oath of office to
Judge Lisa Hill Fenning**

Judges Receive Honors

Chief Bankruptcy Judge Geraldine Mund was honored by the San Fernando Valley Bar Association (SFVBA) as their 1999 "Judge of the Year." The SFVBA recognized Judge Mund's longstanding contributions to the legal community, especially citing her commitment to making the Bankruptcy Court an integral part of the local community. The SFVBA "Judge of the Year" award is presented to judges who demonstrate superior judicial qualities and involvement with the community and the local bar associations.

In January 1999, the Honorable Arthur M. Greenwald and the Honorable Kathleen T. Lax were selected as Outstanding Bankruptcy Judges for 1998 by *Turnarounds & Workouts*, a bankruptcy-related publication. Judge Greenwald was chosen for his stewardship over the Sizzler International bankruptcy case and the innovative procedures he implemented to streamline tort claims. Judge Lax was selected for her consistently pragmatic and efficient approach to law, her decisiveness on key issues, her organizational skills, and her responsiveness to requests for information.

The Honorable James N. Barr was presented with the Harmon G. Scoville Award by the Orange County Bar Association. This prestigious annual award recognizes a member of the Orange County legal community who has exemplified the highest standards of the legal profession, made significant contributions to the Orange County Bar Association, and championed our constitutional system of justice.

**Photo not
available for
public
viewing.**

Congressman Brad Sherman presents Chief Judge Mund with a flag flown over the U.S. Congress. This was the San Fernando Valley Bar Association's first presentation to a federal judge.

Pro Bono Program Expanded

With one of the highest percentages of *pro se* debtors of any district in the United States, the Court, through the cooperation of local bar associations, assists many of these debtors with *pro bono* programs in its Los Angeles, Santa Ana, and San Fernando Valley Divisions. Through the *pro bono* programs, volunteer attorneys provide free legal assistance to ensure that *pro se* debtors fully understand their legal

rights before the Court approves their requests for reaffirmation agreements. The Los Angeles and San Fernando Valley Divisions jointly participate in a *pro bono* program sponsored by the Los Angeles County Bar Association and Public Counsel that also provides free legal assistance with §523 dischargeability adversary proceedings and the filing of Chapter 7 petitions.

Patterned after the successful program initiated by the Los Angeles and San Fernando Valley Divisions in 1998 through the Debtor Assistance Project, the Santa Ana Division developed a similar program for *pro se* debtors in conjunction with the Orange County Bar Association and the Orange County Bankruptcy Forum in November 1999. In addition to the benefits afforded to the *pro se* debtors, the Court also benefits from a reduction in the overall time required to hear these matters.

During 1999, the Debtor Assistance Project in the Los Angeles and San Fernando Valley Divisions matched qualified debtors in 100 non-dischargeability matters with *pro bono* attorneys, made reaffirmation agreement counseling available to 758 individuals, and assisted hundreds of qualified *pro se* debtors in preparing and



EBTOR

Los Angeles County
Bar Association




SSISTANCE

Public
Counsel
L A W C E N T E R



ROJECT



filing voluntary Chapter 7 petitions. In its first two months of operation, the Santa Ana Division *Pro Bono* Program made legal counseling available to 50 *pro se* debtors at reaffirmation agreement hearings.

CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA <i>PRO BONO</i> PROGRAMS: 1999				
Division	Date Program Introduced	Debtors Provided with Dischargeability Assistance	Debtors <i>Offered</i> Reaffirmation Agreement Assistance	Debtors <i>Provided</i> Reaffirmation Agreement Assistance
Los Angeles and San Fernando Valley Divisions	10/97	100	758	440
Santa Ana Division	11/99	N/A	50	33
Total		100	808	473

The *Pro Bono* Program is also featured prominently on the Court's web site, which includes public notices regarding the Program, educational materials on reaffirmation agreements for *pro se* debtors in both English and Spanish, and training and sign-up materials for attorneys interested in volunteering under the Program. The training materials include a brief overview of bankruptcy law and procedure and the issues that might arise when representing low income Chapter 7 debtors. Since its inception, over 200 attorneys have volunteered their services under the Program.

Policy Established for Law-Related Use of Court Facilities

The Honorable James N. Barr and the Honorable Kathleen March participated in an *ad hoc* committee of District Court, Magistrate, and Bankruptcy Judges that drafted a joint District/Bankruptcy Court policy for lending court facilities for law-related uses. This policy, which was approved by both the District and Bankruptcy Courts, provides guidelines for the use of court facilities by federal agencies, bar associations, and law schools. Payment of all additional expenses resulting from the use of Court facilities, including utilities and overtime for building security, must be reimbursed to the providing agency under this policy.



Bankruptcy Mediation Program Assists the Court and Litigants

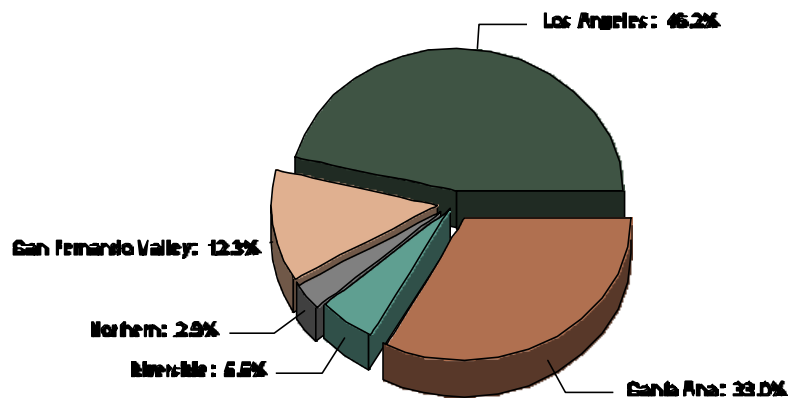
The Court's Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Program, established July 1, 1995 and known as the Bankruptcy Mediation Program, is believed to be the largest program of its type in the nation. Through mediation, parties can resolve their disputes more quickly, at less cost, and often without the stress and pressure associated with litigation. Mediators are appointed by the Court and consist of both attorneys and non-attorneys.

In August 1999, the United States District and Bankruptcy Courts for the Central District of California approved Second Amended General Order No. 95-01, which will be incorporated into the Bankruptcy Court's Local Rules. The Second Amended General Order substantially modifies the provisions concerning confidentiality, specifically, the effect of a recorded and written settlement agreement. Additionally, some matters are eligible for the Program that formerly had been excluded. The amended general order also contains new provisions that allow for mediator compensation and clarify the procedural responsibilities of the attorneys, parties, and mediators. Another change is that the term served by mediators was extended from one to three years. The official Court forms have been modified to streamline the operation of the Mediation Program.

Of the 1,710 matters assigned to the Mediation Program in the Central District through 1999, 1,549 were concluded and 161 remained pending. Of the 1,549 completed matters, 982 (63%) were settled and 567 (37%) were not settled. Matters not settled resume litigation and are decided by a bankruptcy judge. The charts on the following page display the matters assigned to the Mediation Program by Chapter, as well as the distribution of mediation matters within the various divisions of the Court.

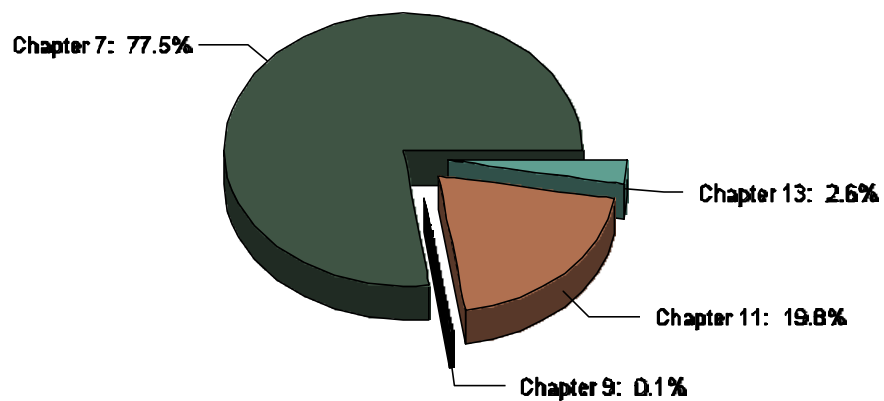
Distribution of Central District Mediation Matters


(August 1995 - December 1999)



Matters Assigned to Mediation Program by Chapter

(August 1995 - December 1999)





Parties and attorneys who attended mediation conferences are sent a comprehensive questionnaire designed to monitor their perceptions of the Mediation Program. As of December 31, 1999, 4,071 questionnaires were mailed to parties and 1,607 (approximately 40%) completed questionnaires were returned. Data from respondents expressing opinions on a variety of questions is provided in the following table:

Mediation Program Participant Satisfaction Survey as of December 31, 1999	
Satisfied with the mediation process.	83%
Would reuse the mediation program.	92%
Thought a fair settlement was reached.	87%
Believed mediator was effective in encouraging clients to engage in a meaningful discussion of the matter.	84%
Believed the mediator was effective in getting the attorneys to engage in meaningful discussion of the matter.	85%

Court Coordinates United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Program

The Court hosted six Romanian bankruptcy judges and a representative from the Romanian Ministry of Justice in March 1999. Sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and coordinated by the Honorable Samuel L. Bufford, the program provided the visitors with an overview of the bankruptcy process in the United States to assist them in their efforts to draft and administer Romanian bankruptcy law. The Romanian judges toured the Clerk's Office and the Office of the United States Trustee, and attended a §341(a) meeting of creditors. The Romanian judges were then paired with bankruptcy judges from the Central District to review case documents in preparation for hearings and to experience how hearings are conducted. Professor Kenneth Klee of the University of California, Los Angeles, provided an overview of the Chapter 11 bankruptcy process for the Romanian judges. Additionally, several meetings were held to introduce the Romanian judges to members of the local bar.



Romanian Judges Visit the Court

Clerk of Court Advises Romanian Bankruptcy Courts

In February 1999, Jon D. Ceretto, Executive Officer/Clerk, participated in a United States Agency for International Development (USAID) program to improve the administration of the bankruptcy system in Romania. Mr. Ceretto began his visit to Romania by conducting fact-finding visits to several of their courts to assess the



**Executive Officer/Clerk Jon D. Ceretto with
Romanian Seminar Participants**

feasibility of automating some of their bankruptcy operations. At a two-day seminar on case administration, Mr. Ceretto provided a presentation on useful case administration techniques to thirty judges and court clerks. Using an off-the-shelf software program, Mr. Ceretto assisted a group in developing a noticing program to replace handwritten notices.



Judicial Workload Equalization Program Continues in 1999

The Court continued to participate in the Judicial Workload Equalization Program (JWEP). Initiated in 1996, the JWEP was designed to help equalize judicial workloads within the Ninth Circuit through the intra-circuit assignment of cases. In 1999, the Honorable Randall Dunn and the Honorable Elizabeth Perris, bankruptcy judges from Oregon, were each assigned 100 adversaries from the Riverside Division that met guidelines established by the Ninth Circuit. The selected adversaries were set for status conferences and heard via teleconferencing and video conferencing. The 100 adversaries assigned in 1998 to the Honorable Frank Alley, bankruptcy judge from Eugene, Oregon, were concluded by July 1999.

Visiting Judge Program Continues in Northern Division

The Northern Division continued its Visiting Judge Program for a third year. Bankruptcy judges participating in the Program included: the Honorable Richard T. Ford, a recalled bankruptcy judge from the Eastern District of California; the Honorable Donal D. Sullivan from the District of Oregon; and the Honorable Samuel J. Steiner, a bankruptcy judge from the Western District of Washington. The judges heard a variety of matters including adversary trials, motions for relief from the automatic stay, and law and motion calendars from the Honorable Robin Riblet's caseload.



Customer Service

Online Case Files Become Available in All Five Divisions

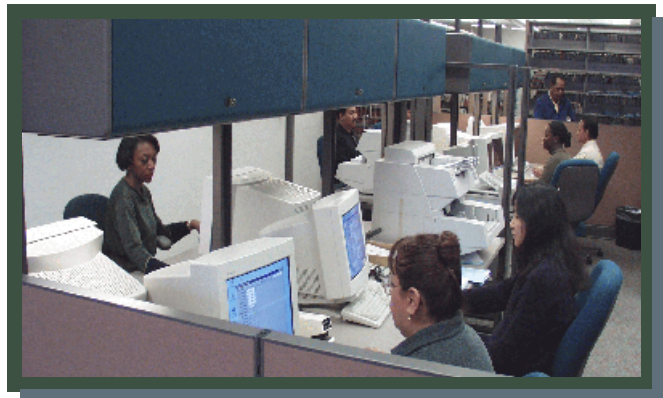
With the commencement of imaging in the Santa Ana and Riverside Divisions in 1999, online case files became available to the public in all five divisions of the Court. This 24-hour, 7-day a week access to electronic images of bankruptcy case documents is a major advancement in customer service and fulfills one of the priorities set forth in the Court's Long Range Plan.

"This is the most efficient court I deal with and the personnel are always courteous and helpful."

Customer Service Response

Online case files can be accessed by attorneys and the public from their offices or homes using a modem without having to come to the court. The online case file system also affords faster access to case documents and simultaneous review by multiple-users.

Integrated into the Court's existing case management system, online case file automation uses high-speed imaging equipment to image case file documents. The use of separator pages with bar codes allows for batch imaging of case documents and the linking of those images to appropriate case docket entries. A quality control process is performed to ensure the clarity of the image and its link to the correct docket entry before making it available



Imaging and quality control of case documents



Public viewing online case files on computer terminals in the Records Section of the Los Angeles Division

to the public. In addition to the improved customer service, the availability of online case files reduced the number of requests to pull the paper case files by more than 50%.

The Court provides online case files through the electronic imaging (scanning) of the bankruptcy case documents most requested by the public. Using webPACER, the public can view online case files by first viewing the case docket and then, if the document is available, clicking on the docket entry to view an image of the corresponding document. Documents in high-profile cases have also been imaged to improve public access to these often requested case files. Case files with a high risk of document tampering are also imaged. The following table shows the availability of online case file documents in each division:

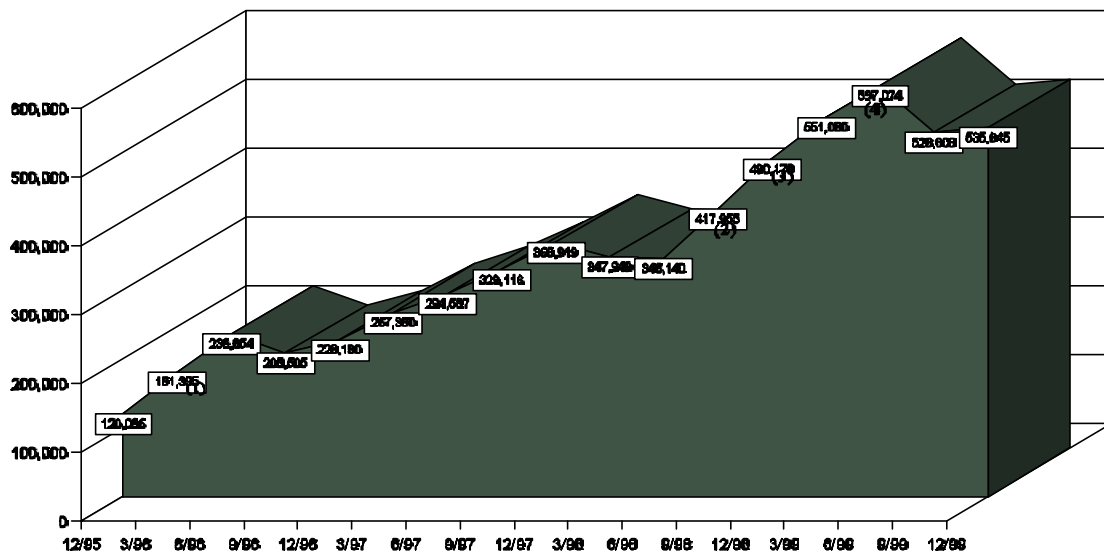
ONLINE CASE FILE AVAILABILITY				
Division	First File Date of Imaged Documents			
	Petitions, Schedules, and Chapter 13 Plans	Chapter 11 Plans	Signed Orders	Orders Generated by BNC*
Los Angeles	5/19/98	5/3/99	8/3/98	6/1/99
Riverside	5/17/99	6/1/99	6/1/99	1/31/00
Santa Ana	4/6/99	8/16/99	8/16/99	12/1/99
Northern	4/17/98	5/3/99	9/14/98	9/10/98
San Fernando Valley	10/1/98	5/3/99	11/2/98	1/11/99

*Includes discharge and dismissal orders generated by the Bankruptcy Noticing Center (BNC)

Online Case Files Result in Record PACER Usage

The availability of online case files throughout the Central District resulted in record PACER usage during 1999. The 2,212,807 minutes of PACER usage in 1999 represents an extraordinary 38% increase over the 1,602,222 minutes of PACER usage reported in 1998. The increase in PACER usage can be attributed to the increased public acceptance of online case files since they were first made available in the Los Angeles, Northern, and San Fernando Valley Divisions in 1998, and in the Santa Ana and Riverside Divisions in 1999. In response to the record volume of webPACER usage, dial-in access to the Court's webPACER system was doubled at the end of 1999 to accommodate the growing number of users. This change, along with the elimination of inter-divisional access, improved the overall efficiency and speed with which webPACER responded to requests for information, resulting in a decrease in the minutes of usage in the third quarter of 1999. PACER usage in the Central District in 1999 generated over \$1.3 million in revenue for the judiciary.

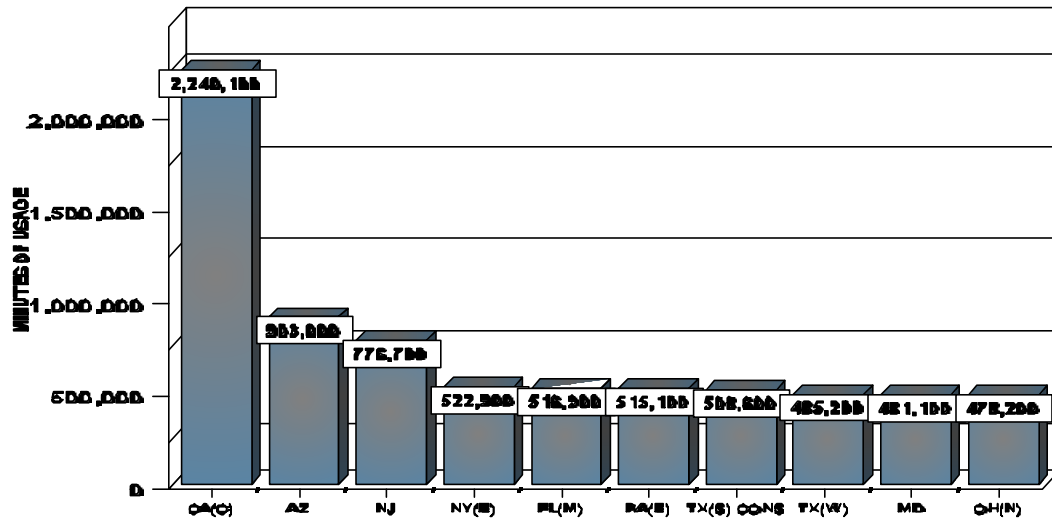
PACER Usage In Minutes
Central District of California



- (1) Number of telephone lines expanded from 20 to 36 on 4/4/96
- (2) webPACER images of petitions/schedules/orders available in LA/ND, 3rd Qtr 1998
- (3) webPACER images of petitions/schedules/orders available in SFV, 4th Qtr 1998
- (4) webPACER images of petitions/schedules/orders available in RS/SA, 2nd Qtr 1999


The Administrative Office has projected Central District PACER usage in the year 2000 to exceed the combined usage of the next three highest volume districts. (See the following graph.)

**FY2000 PROJECTED MINUTES OF PACER USAGE
TOP 10 DISTRICTS**



Public Usage of the Voice Case Information System (VCIS) Increases

The Voice Case Information System (VCIS) is an automated telephone system providing the public with basic case information through the use of a touch-tone telephone. This free service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and allows users to access case information such as case number, case filing date, case chapter, status of case, and asset information. The number of calls in 1999 approached 600,000 inquiries, an 8% increase over the levels reported in 1998. (See the following table.)



ESTIMATED VOICE CASE INFORMATION SYSTEM (VCIS) USAGE: 1998-1999				
Division	Total Calls 1998	Total Calls 1999	Number Change	Percent Change
Los Angeles	224,078	264,000	39,922	18%
Riverside	103,294	108,000	4,706	5%
Santa Ana	76,533	90,000	13,467	18%
Northern	52,176	38,368	-13,808	-26%
San Fernando Valley	81,744	85,200	3,456	4%
District Total	537,825	580,800	42,975	8%

Public Continues to Receive Excellent Customer Service

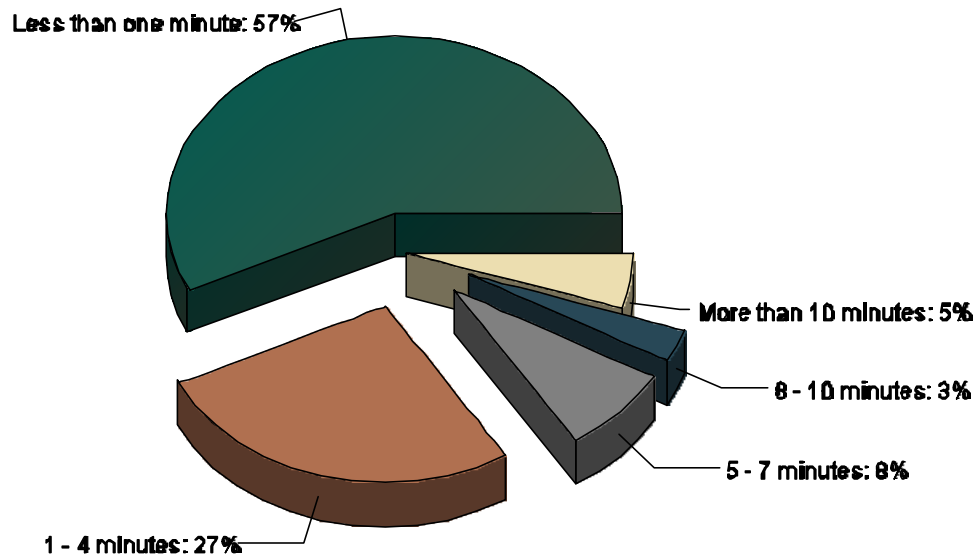
The Customer Service Questionnaire furnishes the Court with important feedback about the quality of customer service provided to the public. In addition to capturing traditional "satisfaction with service" information on a wide variety of variables, the questionnaire allows respondents to write in comments and suggestions. Customer Service Questionnaires are available at all divisions of the Court, as well as on the Court's web site.

An analysis of the responses received from January through December 1999 reflects the following:

- ! Nearly 92% of the respondents rated the overall service of the Court as excellent.
- ! More than 90% of the respondents rated the employee who served them as excellent in each of the following categories: Overall, Courtesy/Attitude, Competent/Helpful, and Speed/Efficiency.
- ! Service was provided to 92% of those responding within seven minutes of their arrival.
- ! The convenience of the facility was rated as excellent by 80% of those responding, while facility appearance was rated as excellent by 94% of the respondents.

Providing customers with fast service is an important goal of the Bankruptcy Court. In 1999, a remarkable 57% of the respondents reported that they were served within one minute of their arrival, compared with 45% in 1998. Moreover, only 5% of the respondents in 1999 waited more than ten minutes, compared to 16% of the respondents in 1998. The following chart illustrates the length of wait for service reported by respondents to the Customer Service Questionnaire.

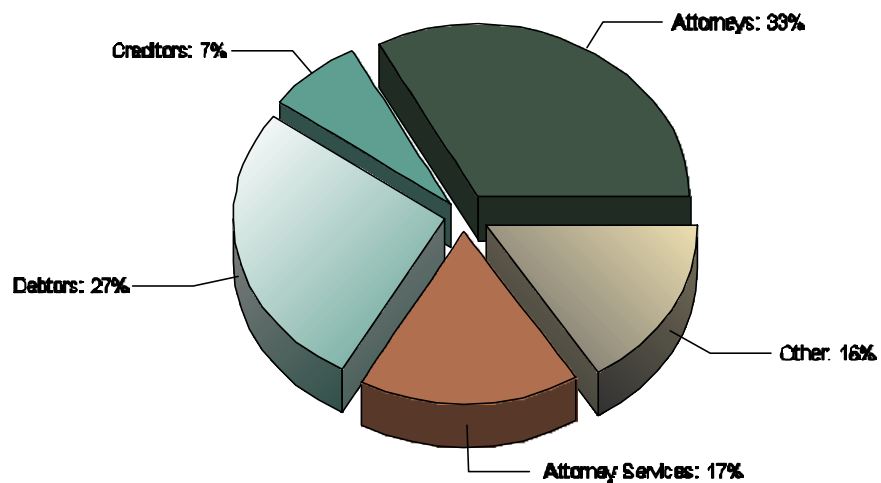
Customer Service Questionnaire: Length of Wait (January - December 1999)



The following table and chart detail the services used by Customer Service Questionnaire respondents and the types of customers who responded.

Customer Service Questionnaire: Services Used (Multiple responses possible)	
Intake/Filing Counter	60.5%
Records	19.5%
Information Office	6.6%
Courtroom Services	3.3%

Customer Service Questionnaire: Who Responded (January - December 1999)





Court's Web Site Continues to Expand

The Court's web site continued to provide the public with a quick and easy method of obtaining court forms, reference materials such as the Local Bankruptcy Rules, and the latest Court information. Using the web site, customers can download a wide variety of court forms and other documents free of charge, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Users can also apprise themselves of the latest developments in the Court by accessing the public notices and general orders. During 1999, the Court substantially increased the type and amount of information, forms, and other documents available on the web site by adding more court forms, updated materials regarding the Court's *Pro Bono* and Mediation Programs, and links to various bar associations and governmental agencies.

Over 146,000 people have visited the Court's web site since its debut in April 1997. The web site address is <http://www.cacb.uscourts.gov>.

Bankruptcy Education Videos Made Available to the Public

The Basics of Chapter 7 Bankruptcy, a 20-minute debtor education video provided at no charge by VISA U.S.A., was made available for public viewing in all divisions. The video explains bankruptcy concepts important to the debtor such as exemptions and the roles of attorneys and trustees, while also providing a balanced overview of the bankruptcy process. This is especially important in the Central District where approximately one-third of all petitions filed are without the assistance of an attorney (*pro se*).

Telephone On-Hold Feature Introduced District-Wide

Each division added an on-hold feature to its telephone system. The combination of music and helpful information was designed to answer many commonly asked questions. A portion of the message loop is tailored to address issues particularly relevant to each division.



Drop Box Filing Enhances Customer Convenience

The Court provides customers with the added convenience of filing documents outside of normal office hours using the drop-boxes in the Los Angeles, Santa Ana, and San Fernando Valley Divisions from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., and in the Riverside Division from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (The Northern Division does not offer a drop box.) Drop boxes also can be used by the public during office hours to avoid having to wait in line. Documents placed in the drop box receive a “filed” stamp reflecting the date it was deposited in the drop box. Since documents from the drop box can be processed outside of the busiest office hours, this service also helps the Court better handle its workload. In 1999, an estimated 284,297 documents were filed using drop boxes in the four participating divisions. (See the following table.)

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF PLEADINGS LEFT IN SELF-SERVICE DROP BOXES: 1999*					
Division Document	LA	RS	SA	SFV	District
Documents With Fees	15,600	4,975	2,450	5,533	28,558
Documents Without Fees	132,600	54,917	29,172	39,050	255,739
TOTAL	148,200	59,892	31,622	44,583	284,297

*The Northern Division does not have a drop box.



Facilities

Long Range Objective Completed

The move of the Santa Ana Division into the new Ronald Reagan Federal Building and United States Courthouse in January 1999 completed the Court's long range objective of relocating all divisions to new or upgraded offices.

Los Angeles Division

Significant changes that took place in the Edward R. Roybal Federal Building and the 300 North Los Angeles Street Federal Building included:


The Systems Integration Division was relocated to larger space on the 10th floor of the Roybal Building. The Analysis & Information, Communications, and Space Planning Departments were relocated to new office space on the 12th floor.

The protection of computer equipment and data against power failure was improved by the addition of three large UPS (uninterruptable power supplies) units. Dedicated air-conditioning units for computer network equipment closets throughout the Roybal Building were installed to prevent the interruption of services or loss of data from heat damage.

Systems furniture in the Court Services and Case Initiation Sections were reconfigured to better accommodate work flow as well as ergonomics.

The height of the partition walls of the public carrels located in the Records Section was reduced to improve case file security. (See picture at right.)





A group of workstations was built to accommodate the Division's imaging operations, including two high speed/high volume scanners for batch processing, a flat bed scanner, and eight computers.

Riverside Division

Construction of a District Court facility adjacent to the Bankruptcy Court facility in Riverside commenced in 1999. The new building was designed so that both courthouses will share a common public entrance.

The gate securing the judges' parking area and loading dock was replaced.

Additional document management components were added to systems furniture at each cashiering window.

Santa Ana Division

The Santa Ana Division completed its move to the new Ronald Reagan Federal Building and United States Courthouse, opening its doors to the public on January 19, 1999. The ten-story building became home to four bankruptcy judges, four district judges, two magistrate judges, a Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals judge, and the Bankruptcy Court's Clerk's Office. The building was officially dedicated at ceremonies held on January 7, 1999.

Following occupancy of the new building, additional improvements were made including the addition of a door in the records counter area to improve security, construction of a new office in Case Initiation, and the installation of a service counter and vending machine area in the break room.

Northern Division

The infrastructure to support video conference hearings was installed in both courtrooms of the Northern Division. (See video conference hearing article on page 40.) Several workstations were reconfigured to improve workflow.

San Fernando Valley Division

A new Public Information Desk was installed in the Intake area to provide customers with easier access to information, forms, and general assistance. (See photo below.)



Customer Service Representative Raoul Mendez

Systems furniture in the Case Initiation area was reconfigured to facilitate the integration of imaging and archiving operations into the team structure.

Document management modules were added to workstations in Courtroom Services.

Occupant Emergency Preparedness/Building Security Activities

The Clerk's Office developed an *Emergency Reference Guide* for the senior staff of each division to improve management's ability to respond quickly and effectively in the event of an emergency. This reference guide features an emergency checklist of priorities requiring immediate attention by the Deputy-in-Charge or other senior management. The reference guide also serves as an easy-to-use emergency resource with: emergency phone numbers, procedures for accepting emergency petitions, scripts and procedures for changing telephone messages to keep the public informed of the status of the emergency, public notices to be posted at the closed division, and "Safe Area" maps.

The *Emergency Reference Guide* is part of an emergency evacuation kit that also contains a cellular telephone with extra batteries for on-going communication. Once a division has been evacuated and the emergency is under control, the emergency evacuation kit allows the Clerk's Office to continue operating on an emergency basis. The kit, which is a "portable courthouse," also contains: manual receipts, "filed" stamps, general office supplies, a judge assignment deck for new case filings, and signs notifying the public of the temporary emergency filing/information area.



The Court's emergency evacuation kits



Human Resources

Employment Dispute Resolution Plan Implemented

As all courts were required by the Judicial Conference to implement an employment dispute resolution plan, the Court adopted the Ninth Circuit Model Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)/Employment Dispute Resolution (EDR) Plans with several modifications approved by the Board of Judges. While the Court's EEO Plan remained essentially the same, the new EDR Plan provides all covered employees with a five-step process for resolving employment disputes related to: (1) nondiscrimination rights, (2) family and medical leave rights, (3) re-employment rights for members of the uniformed services, (4) worker adjustment and retraining notification rights, (5) workplace health and safety rights, and (6) prohibition against requiring polygraph tests from employees. In the Central District of California, the five sequential steps in the dispute resolution process involve: counseling, consultation with the appointing officer, mediation, judicial officer hearing/disposition, and review by the Ninth Circuit Judicial Council Executive Committee. Following a district-wide employee orientation, the EDR plan was implemented on January 1, 1999.

Orientation Program for New Employees Developed

The Court Resources Division, in conjunction with the Communications and Quality Assurance/Training Departments, developed a full-day orientation program for new employees. Under this program implemented in September 1999, all new employees throughout the district report to the Los Angeles Division on their first day of employment. The formal training and orientation program includes an overview and tour of the Court, a description of employee benefits, an outline of office policies and procedures, and training in use of the Court's Intranet, webPACER, and cc:Mail systems. In addition to more effectively communicating this information to new employees, this program results in a more timely and efficient processing of paperwork, photos, identification, and fingerprinting.



Staffing Equalization Between Divisional Offices Implemented

Staffing equalization measures were implemented in response to staffing imbalances between divisional offices that occurred as a result from shifts in filing patterns and attendant workloads. Under this program, six employees from the Santa Ana Division requested voluntary lateral reassignment to understaffed divisions. Four of these staff members transferred to the Los Angeles Division and two transferred to the Riverside Division.

Policy and Procedure for Hire and Separation Improves Court Security

The Financial Services Department coordinated the development of a policy and procedure for notifying Personnel, ITD, and Offices Services of new, transferred, and separated employees. The policy was designed to expedite the processing of these individuals and to ensure that all Court property is properly tracked, while improving physical and systems security. Following the training of all managers, the Los Angeles Division began piloting the new policy and procedure on April 1, 1999. It is currently being modified to include integration with the Court's automated fixed asset tracking program. Once this integration has been completed, the Court anticipates releasing it district-wide in 2000.

Procedures on Accidents at Court Facilities Implemented

Procedures and reporting forms for accidents occurring on Court facilities were drafted and distributed to all divisions in December 1999. The accident procedures and reporting forms were designed to provide each division with a uniform process for handling injuries in the workplace.

Recruitment Expands to Job Fairs

The Court Resources Division attended job fairs located on the campuses of the University of Southern California and San Bernardino Valley Community College. The Court Resources Division anticipates attending more job fairs in the future to increase the Court's pool of applicants, as well as to increase Court visibility in our communities.



Tuition Reimbursement Program Enters Third Year

Initiated in 1997, the Tuition Reimbursement Program continued to grow in 1999 with 19 Court employees receiving assistance. Several employees who participated in the tuition reimbursement program received their degrees this year.

Employee Recognition Programs

Annual Awards Ceremonies

The Bankruptcy Court held its Annual Awards Ceremonies in September 1999 to recognize outstanding performance by Clerk's Office employees. A total of 159 awards was distributed at formal ceremonies hosted by each divisional office. Jon D. Ceretto, Executive Officer/Clerk of Court, welcomed those in attendance and Chief Judge Mund thanked and encouraged the staff. Criteria for the 1999 awards included:

- ! Implementation of new technology that improved and expanded the Court's service capabilities to the public, judges, and members of the bar
- ! Sustained superior performance in supporting the daily operations of the Court
- ! Increased case processing effectiveness while reducing the Court's pending caseload, and increasing docketing speed, volume of cases closed, and accuracy
- ! Outstanding customer service that was recognized by the public, judges, supervisors, and peers.

1999 ANNUAL AWARDS CEREMONIES



Employee of the Month

Each month, the Court awards an “Employee of the Month” award to a staff member in the Clerk’s Office who has gone above and beyond the scope of his/her responsibilities to assist the public, help fellow employees, or improve the work environment. At a special monthly ceremony, each winner received a cash award, an “Employee of the Month” certificate, a small gift, and a photograph of the presentation. Additionally, an article spotlighting the employee appeared in the Court’s monthly newsletter, the *Full Court Press*.

1999 EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH



Top row (from left):

**Nathan Tin Nguyen, Los Angeles (September); Donna K. Neubauer, Riverside (May);
Gordon Wiley, Los Angeles (November); Nickie L. Bolte, Santa Ana (July);
Jon D. Ceretto, Executive Officer/Clerk**

Center row (from left):

**Arlene Chavez, San Fernando Valley (March); Cindy Leos, Riverside (October);
Donna M. Johnson, Santa Ana (February); Linda Paredes, Los Angeles (January)**

Front row (from left):

**Steve Fujita, Los Angeles (August); Kam Rust, Santa Barbara (June);
Kathleen Ogier, San Fernando Valley (December); Rachel Castillo, Los Angeles (April)**